

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 18041

LIMDIS

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR,KU,LE,SS,UR,XF,PLO,JO,SY,YE,YS

SUBJECT: SOVIET MFA OFFICIAL COMMENTS OF MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS

REF: MOSCOW 17790 (NOTAL)

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1. SUMMARY: DURING DECEMBER 16 CALL BY POLITICAL COUNSELOR, Y.D. PYRLIN, DEPUTY CHIEF, MFA MEAR EAST COUNTIRES DIVISION, EXPRESSED VIEW THAT MOST SIGNIFICANT RESULT OF HUSSEIN-ASAD TALKS IN AMMAN ES HORDAN'S REAFFIRMATION OF THE PLO AS THE LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PALESTINIANS. JORDAN'S VIEWS ON THIS POINT, AS WELL AS ON OTHER GENERAL QUESTIONS, PYRLIN SAID, WILL BE DISCUSSED DURING VISIT TO MOSCOW BY JORDANIAN DELEGATION HEADED BY FORMER PRIME MINISTER ABDUL MUNEM RIFA'I BEGINNING DECEMBER 22. REGARDING RECENT ARAFAT VISIT, PYRLIN STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PLO'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE GENEVA MEPC FORUM, AND REITERATED THAT MOSCOW'S UNEQUIVOCAL VIEW IS THAT THE PLO SHOULD BE A SEPARATE DELEGATION AT GENEVA AND SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN NEGOTIATIONS FROM THE BEGINNING. HE CALLED THE PLO A "STRANGE AND COMPLICATED ORGANIZATION," BUT STATED THAT ARAFAT IS A "CENTRIST" SUPPORTED BY ALL MAJOR PALESTINIAN LEADERS WITH THE EXCEPTION OF GEORGE HABBASH. PYRLIN INSISTED THAT MOSCOW HAD NO INTEREST IN URGING THE PLO TO DECLARE A GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE AND THAT THIS WOULD NOT BE PRACTICAL. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MOSCOW AND THE PLO, PYRLIN SAID, HAD BEEN BRIDGED BY THE COMPROMISE LANGUAGE USED IN THE ARAFAT COMMUNIQUE. PYRLIN WAS NON-COMMITTAL ON THE PURPOSES OF VINOGRADOV'S RECENT VISIT TO THE REGION, AND DISPLAYED A CERTAIN ADMIRATION FOR THE RESULTS OBTAINED BY SYRIA'S RECENT "POLITICAL OFFENSIVE." HE ALSO INSISTED THAT SOVIET REFUSAL TO RESUME DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL HAS NO CONNECTION WITH SOVIET DOMESTIC PROBLEMS WITH LOCAL JEWISH COMMUNITY. MOSCOW'S RELATIONS WITH CAIRO HAD RECENTLY IMPROVED, ACCORDING TO PYRLIN. THE VISIT BY THE KUWAIT FOREIGN MINISTER WAS "MAINLY ROUTINE," HE SAID, ALTHOUGH HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE SUBJECT OF ARMS SALES HAD COME UP. HE ALSO CONFIRMED THAT HUSSEIN'S VISIT TO MOSCOW IS SCHEDULED FOR NEXT JUNE. END SUMMARY.

2. SYRIA-JORDAN. PYRLIN SAID THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RECENT DISCUSSIONS IN AMMAN WAS STILL UNCLEAR. CONFIDENTIAL

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WHILE HE HAD NOT YET RECEIVED A REPORT FROM THE SOVIET EMBASSIES IN DAMASCUS OR AMMAN, JORDAN'S REAFFIRMATION OF THE PLO AS THE LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ARAB PEOPLE OF PALESTINE WAS OBVIOUSLY EXTREMELY IMPORTANT. JORDON, HE SAID, HAD ALWAYS BEEN LUKE-WARM TO THE RABAT DECISION, BUT COMMUNIQUE SEEMED TO INDICATE THAT AMMAN WAS MORE OR LESS RESIGNED TO PLO REPRESENTATION AS THE PALESTINIANS' SPOKESMAN.

THE MOST SERIOUS PROBLEM, PYRLIN CONTINUED, WILL BE THE "IMPLEMENTATION" OF THE ELEMENTS OF THE COMMUNIQUE. IN THIS REGARD, PYRLIN SAID THAT HE EXPECTED TO LEARN MORE ABOUT JORDAN'S VIEWS ON "MANY GENERAL QUESTIONS" WHEN A JORDANIAN DELEGATION HEADED BY FORMER PRIME MINISTER RIFA'I ARRIVES IN MOSCOW ON DECEMBER 22 (REFTEL). IN THIS REGARD, PYRLIN CHARACTERIZED RIFA'I AS A "REALIST" AND A "STATESMAN WHO IS GREATLY RESPECTED IN THE USSR." JORDON'S AMBASSADOR TO THE UN WILL BE ON THE DELEGATION, AS WILL OTHER IMPORTANT JORDANIANS, HE SAID. PYRLIN ALSO CONFIRMED THAT KING HUSSEIN WILL COME TO MOSCOW NEXT YEAR IN JUNE. PYRLIN SAID THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION HAS BECOME THE CENTRAL PROBLEM IN THE MIDDLE EAST. HE DESCRIBED THE SITUATION THERE AS SO COMPLEX THAT WHAT IS NEEDED IS SOME FORM OF COMMON GROUND BY ALL THE ARABS. OTHERWISE, THERE IS "NO HOPE" OF RESOLVING THE PROBLEM.

3. PLO AND ARAFAT VISIT. PYRLIN SAID THE "MAIN POSITIVE RESULT" OF THE ARAFAT VISIT WAS THE "ACCEPTANCE" BY THE PLO OF THE GENEVA MEPC. THIS REPRESENTED A "VERY BIG STEP FORWARD," HE ADDED, BECAUSE THE PLO NOW CAN SIT DOWN AT THE SAME NEGOTIATING TABLE WITH THE ISRAELIS. CONCERNING THE FORM OF PLO PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA, PYRLIN SAID THE SOVIET POSITION IS THAT THE PLO SHOULD BE A "SEPARATE DELEGATION" AND SHOULD PARTICIPATE "FROM THE BEGINNING." ASKED ABOUT POSSIBLE PLO PARTICIPATION AS PART OF ANOTHER DELEGATION--FOR INSTANCE JORDAN--PYRLIN REPLIED THAT SIMILAR IDEAS HAD BEEN DISCUSSED BEFORE, BUT ONLY "AS IDEAS," AND THE ADOPTION OF ANY SUCH PLAN NOW WOULD DEPEND ON PLO ACCEPTANCE. OF COURSE, HE SAID, IF THE PLO WERE TO ACCEPT SUCH AN

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ARRANGEMENT, THE USSR WOULD CERTAINLY GO ALONG. PYRLIN REPEATED THAT THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM IS CENTRAL AND POINTED OUT THAT SUPPORT FOR THE PALESTINIAN IS ONE OF THE ONLY GENUINE UNIFYING ELEMENTS IN THE ARAB WORLD. HE ADDED THAT THE PALESTINIANS NOW ARE ESSENTIALLY INTERESTED IN "RECEIVING SOMETHING CONCRETE," AND IN THIS CONNECTION, HE FELT THAT THE SAUNDERS STATEMENT REPRESENTED FORWARD MOVEMENT BY THE U.S. PYRLIN DENIED THAT A FOLLOW-UP VISIT BY A PLO DELEGATION WAS ANTICIPATED, AND HE ALSO DENIED THAT ANYONE FROM ARAFAT'S ENTOURAGE HAD STAYED BEHIND IN MOSCOW TO CONTINUE NEGOTIATIONS. THERE ARE NO PLO REPRESENTATIVES LIVING IN MOSCOW, HE SAID, EITHER OPERATING AS SEPARATE ENTITIES OR ON THE STAFF OF ARAB EMBASSIES. SOVIET COMMUNICATION WITH THE PLO,

HE SAID, IS THROUGH DAMASCUS OR BEIRUT, PRIMARILY BEIRUT.

4. AS FOR THE PLO ITSELF, IT IS A "STRANGE AND COMPLICATED ORGANIZATION," PYRLIN SAID. REPRESENTATIVES OF SIX ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE PLO CAME WITH ARAFAT TO MOSCOW TO "PROTECT THEIR OWN INTERESTS," BUT ARAFAT DID ALL THE NEGOTIATING "ON BEHALF" OF THE VARIOUS GROUPS. WHEN ASKED TO COMPARE ARAFAT WITH THE PDFLP'S NAYIF HAWATMAH, PYRLIN SAID ARAFAT IS A "CENTRIST," ACCEPTABLE TO EVERYONE EXCEPT GEORGE HABBASH. PYRLIN CHARACTERIZED HAWATMAH--WHO, HE SAID, SUPPORTS ARAFAT--AS A "REALIST." WHEN ASKED WHETHER THE USSR HAS A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH HAWATMAH BECAUSE OF HIS MARXIST BELIEFS, PYRLIN DENIED ANY SPECIAL TIES AND ADDED THAT HAWATMAH IS "NOT A REAL MARXIST" AT ALL. PYRLIN ADDED THAT THE PDFLP LACKS REAL STRENGTH AND IS ONLY A SMALL ORGANIZATION WITHIN THE OVERALL PLO. PYRLIN CALLED THE PLO A "MULTI-FACED" ORGANIZATION WHICH CONTAINS MANY INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS.

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ONE EXAMPLE OF THIS, HE ADMITTED,
IS THE PLO'S REFUSAL TO NEGOTIATE WITH ISRAEL WHILE
AT THE SAME TIME ENDORSING THE SOVIET NOVEMBER 9
INITIATIVE ON GENEVA. HE REITERATED THAT THERE HAD
BEEN NO MOVEMENT ON THE OPENING OF THE PLO OFFICE HERE,
AND SIAD THAT "PERHAPS IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR THE
PALESTINIANS TO CHOOSE A PROPER REPRESENTATIVE."

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5. ASKED ABOUT THE SOVIET POSITION ON A POSSIBLE
PLO GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE, PYRLIN SAID THIS WAS
ESSENTIALLY AN EGYPTIAN IDEA TO WHICH THE PALESTINIANS
WERE OPPOSED. REASON FOR SUCH OPPOSITION, PYRLIN
SPECULATED, IS THAT FOLLOWING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF
A GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE, ANOTHER CENTER OF POLITICAL
POWER MIGHT DEVELOP WHICH WOULD DILUTE THE INFLUENCE
WHICH THE PLO NOW ENJOYED WITH THE OVERALL PALESTINIAN
POPULATION. HE SAID THE MAJOR DIFFICULTY IN THIS
REGARD IS THAT THE PALESTINIANS HAVE YET TO DETERMINE
"THE PIECE OF SOIL" SUCH A GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE WOULD
REPRESENT. THE ALGERIAN SITUATION PROVIDED NO PARALLEL
BECAUSE IT HAD ALWAYS BEEN CLEAR THAT THE FLN WAS
FIGHTING FOR A WELL-DEFINED TERRITORY. PYRLIN SAID
UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT MOSCOW HAD NOT URGED THE PLO TO
ACCEPT THE CONCEPT OF A GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE, BUT ADDED
THAT WHATEVER IS ACCEPTABLE TO THE PALESTINIANS IS
ACCEPTABLE TO SOVIETS AS WELL.

6. ELEMENTS OF AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT. PYRLIN REAFFIRMED
THAT THE USSR FIRMLY SUPPORTS THREE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS FOR A JUST MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT: (1) ISRAELI
WITHDRAWAL TO ITS PRE-1967 BORDERS; (2) SATISFACTION OF
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO THEIR OWN
HOMELAND; AND (3) THE GUARANTEE OF THE SECURITY OF ALL
STATES IN THE REGION, INCLUDING ISRAEL. HE SAID THAT
THE PALESTINIANS DO NOT ACCEPT THE 1967 BORDERS, AND
WHEN QUESTIONED CLOSELY HE ADMITTED THAT SOME ELEMENTS

OF THE PLO CONSIDER REFERENCE TO ISRAEL'S WITHDRAWAL FROM "ALL TERRITORY OCCUPIED BY FORCE" IN THE ARAFAT COMMUNIQUE TO MEAN EXACTLY THAT, I.E., ALL THE TERRITORY OF PALESTINE. WHEN IT WAS POINTED OUT TO HIM THAT PLO DECLARATION ON HIS QUESTION WAS THEREFORE LARGELY FOR POLITICAL AND PROPAGANDA EFFECT, PYRLIN REPLIED THAT PUBLIC POSITION OF PLO IN SUCH FORA AS UPCOMING SC DEBATE WAS ALSO VERY IMPORTANT. DISCUSSING A POSSIBLE FUTURE PALESTINIAN STATE, PYRLIN SAID THE SOVIET UNION HAS IN MIND THE WEST BANK AND GAZA; THE PLO, ON THE OTHER HAND, DOES NOT YET "HAVE A FIXED IDEA" ON THIS POINT. PYRLIN ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT "SOME PLO LEADERS ACCEPTED" THE WEST BANK-GAZA
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CONCEPT. PYRLIN ADMITTED THAT THESE TWO TERRITORIES WERE ALREADY DENSELY POPULATED AND COULD HARDLY ACCOMMODATE A LARGE NEW INFLUX OF POPULATION, BUT HE STATED THAT THIS KIND OF QUESTION COULD BE WORKED OUT AT GENEVA.

7. SYRIA. PYRLIN PORTRAYED THE RECENT VINOGRADOV TRIP TO THE REGION AS BASICALLY A FACT-FINDING MISSION CONCERNING THE SYRIAN AND IRAQI POSITIONS ON "GENERAL QUESTIONS". HE ALSO ADDED THAT THE RECENT SYRIAN "POLITICAL OFFENSIVE" WAS PAYING DIVIDENDS SUCH AS THE INVITATION TO THE PLO TO PARTICIPATE AT THE SC DEBATE IN JANUARY--A "SYRIAN IDEA", ACCORDING TO PYRLIN. HE EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM ABOUT ANOTHER GOLAN DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT BECAUSE "THE SYRIANS DON'T SEEM TO BE INTERESTED." HE REPEATED THE LINE THAT SUCH AN AGREEMENT WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO MOSCOW "IF IT FELL WITHIN THE GENEVA FRAMEWORK, AND IF IT WERE NEGOTIATED BY ALL INTERESTED PARTIES."

8. USSR-ISRAEL RELATIONS. PYRLIN ACKNOWLEDGED THAT "SOONER OR LATER" THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, BUT FIRST THERE MUST BE "REAL MOVEMENT" TOWARD A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT. ANOTHER REASON FOR SOVIET REFUSAL TO CONSIDER RESTORATION OF RELATIONS WAS ANTI-SOVIET CAMPAIGN CARRIED OUT BY ZIONISTS, HE SAID. EXAMPLE OF LATTER WAS STAGING OF A ZIONIST CONGRESS IN BRUSSELS SHORTLY BEFORE THE 25TH CPSU CONGRESS. WHEN IT WAS SUGGESTED THAT SOVIET INTERNAL PROBLEMS ALSO MIGHT INFLUENCE THE USSR'S RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL, PYRLIN UNCONVINCINGLY DENIED THAT DISSIDENT SITUATION OR THE EMIGRATION ISSUE INFLUENCED SOVIET POLICY TOWARD ISRAEL.

9. SOVIET-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS. ACCORDING TO PYRLIN,

BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS ON DEBT RESCHEDULING ARE SUSPENDED FOR NOW BECAUSE OF THE NEW YEAR SEASON, BUT "THIS COMPLICATED PROBLEM" WILL PROBABLY BE TAKEN UP AGAIN AFTER THE FIRST OF THE YEAR. IN GENERAL, HE ADDED, EGYPTIAN-SOVIET RELATIONS ARE "BETTER THAN BEFORE", BECAUSE THE "DIFFERENCES WERE NOT BASED ON FACT,"
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I.E., THERE IS NO UNDERLYING BASIS TO JUSTIFY THE RECENT DOWNTURN. IN THIS REGARD, HE SAID SOVIETS HAD NOTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO RECENT OVERT ANTI-SOVIET STATEMENTS BY SADAT OR OTHER EGYPTIAN LEADERS. TROUBLESOME ARTICLES IN EGYPTIAN PRESS, HOWEVER, CONTINUE TO APPEAR.

10. DHOFAR REBELLION. WHEN ASKED ABOUT REPORTS OF RECENT GOVERNMENT SUCCESSES IN OMAN, PYRLIN SAID THAT HE HAD JUST RECEIVED A REPORT FROM THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN TEHRAN WHICH QUOTED AN IRANIAN STATEMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT THE DHOFAR REBELLION WAS "FINISHED", BUT THAT IRAN WOULD MAINTAIN ITS PRESENCE IN OMAN IN ANY CASE. PYRLIN WAS SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE IRANIAN DECLARATION, POINTING OUT THAT THE REBELLION WAS SUPPORTED BY THE PDY, "A SMALL BUT INFLUENTIAL COUNTRY" IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD.

11. KUWAIT. PYRLIN CHARACTERIZED THE RECENT VISIT BY THE KUWAIT FOREIGN MINISTER AS "MAINLY ROUTINE". ASKED SPECIFICALLY WHETHER ARMS SALES HAD BEEN DISCUSSED, PYRLIN REPLIED "ONLY AS AN IDEA FOR THE FUTURE".

12. LEBANON. PYRLIN CALLED THE SITUATION A "TRAGEDY" FOR THE MIDDLE EAST IN GENERAL, AND ESPECIALLY FOR LEBANON ITSELF. HE SAID THAT WHAT IS NEEDED IS "A POSITIVE POLITICAL DIALOGUE" BETWEEN ALL THE PARTIES. ASKED IF HE FORESAW THIS HAPPENING, HE REPLIED, "INSHAH ALLAH".

13. SPANISH SAHARA. ASKED ABOUT ALGERIAN-MOROCCAN DISPUTE REGARDING SPANISH SAHARA, PYRLIN SAID THIS AREA IS NOT WITHIN HIS SPHERE OF RESPONSIBILITY, BUT OFFERED THE OPINION THAT THE SITUATION IS PERHAPS "NOT AS TENSE AS BEFORE." HOWEVER, HE QUICKLY ADDED THAT THIS QUESTION HAS BECOME THE "NUMBER ONE" ISSUE FOR ALGERIAN FOREIGN POLICY, AND AGREED THAT THIS COULD WELL BECOME A VERY THORNY QUESTION IN THE FUTURE.

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14. COMMENT. OVERALL TONE OF PYRLIN'S COMMENTS
SUBSTANTIATES THE VIEW THAT THE PLO AND ITS LEADERSHIP
REMAIN, TO CONSIDERABLE EXTENT, SOMETHING OF AN ENIGMA TO
MOSCOW. PYRLIN CONVEYED THE IMPRESSION, HOWEVER, THAT
THE SOVIET UNION FEELS IT HAS LITTLE OPTION OTHER THAN
TO BACK ARAFAT AND BELIEVES THAT RESTORATION OF SOVIET
PRESTIGE IN THE AREA WILL BE GENERATED BY MOSCOW'S
SUPPORT FOR THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE. HOWEVER, PYRLIN
CLEARLY INDICATED THAT, HTE "COMPROMISE LANGUAGE" IN
THE ARAFAT COMMUNIQUE NOTWITHSTANDING, THERE REMAIN
WIDE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PLO AND MOSCOW ON MANY
MAJOR QUESTIONS.
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